

Just A Minor Repair

by Wanda Hargrove

Johnny looked up at the sound of the gunshot. Looking around, he noticed the car being surrounded by the police. He never noticed the man running towards him with a gun his hand.

"You!" the man shouted as he reached out and grabbed Johnny by the shirt. "Where's the keys?"

"My partner has the keys," Johnny blurted surprised, his hands going into the air in an instinctive gesture of surrender.

"Where's your partner?" the man sneered maneuvering the helpless paramedic towards the passenger side of the squad.

Johnny tore his eyes from the gun being waved in his face and blinked at it's owner. "He's...he's over there," he stammered waving vaguely across the street toward the hamburger stand.

The man screamed in rage, and smashed the gun across Johnny's face. Johnny dropped to his knees. The gunman pulled open the passenger door of the squad and shoved the paramedic inside. He followed him up, slamming the door and forcing Johnny over as if to use him as a barricade against the police.

Johnny grabbed a hold of the steering wheel, and glanced at his refectation, his head swimming from the blow. He barely noticed his split bottom lip, or the scrape to his cheek from the barrel of the gun.

The man began to rummage around the squad, pulling things out left and right. He snarled, "I know you gotta have an extra set of keys. Turn 'em over!"

"I already told you, mister, my partner has the only set!"

"Wrong answer," the man shouted. He whacked Johnny on the side of the head with his gun barrel, then shoved the gun barrel into Johnny's ribs. "You've got one more chance to give me them keys before I kill you," the man's voice dropped to a low and controlled but menacing level.

Roy and the older detective, Ed Michaels, stood behind one of the cars that had the little red fire department rescue squad boxed in. Ed was contacting his dispatcher.

"This is Unit 2, patch me into the LA County Fire Department Dispatcher."

"10-4, Unit 2," replied the disembodied voice.

Detective Michaels looked over at Roy. "DeSoto, I'm sorry this had to happen, but I did warn you to get your partner out of the way." He turned back to survey the crime scene. "We've got a hostage negotiator on the way along with the SWAT team."

"Look Detective, all we needed to do was change a broken fan belt. How were we supposed to know that this would happen?" Roy waved his hand out indicating the scene spread before him.

The conversation as ended as the radio came to life again. "Unit 2," came the voice of the dispatcher through the little speaker. "I have the LA County Fire Dispatcher on the line."

"10-4," replied the detective, "LA County Fire, I need to you to patch a line through to your rescue squad, number 51. One of the men is being held hostage inside the vehicle."

"10-4" acknowledged the voice of Sam Lanier. In a matter of moments his voice returned. "You're patched through."

Inside the squad, the agitated robber, slowly began to squeeze the trigger. Three beeps sounded from the radio. He relaxed his grip on the trigger.

"What's that noise?" he snapped.

"That's the radio. Dispatch is trying to get hold of both me and my partner."

"Squad 51 this is LA County Fire Dispatch. I have a Detective Michaels..."

Before the sentence could be finished, the agitated robber grabbed the microphone. "Get me the keys to this truck or this guy's dead!"

Detective Michael's voice cracked in response, "If you kill your hostage, then we'll be forced to kill you on the spot. I'm sure you don't want to die, and I know that the paramedic you have doesn't want to die either. Do the sensible thing, and give yourself up before you have a murder rap on your head."

The man was getting more agitated. "No way, Pal! You're not going to send me to prison. I swear if you don't get me those keys, I'm going to kill this guy! Then I'll blow this truck up and take out as many of you pigs as I can!"

Before the gunman could take his thumb away from the mike, Johnny shouted, "Don't give him the keys!"

The man dropped the mike, and slapped Johnny viciously on the side of the head again with the gun. "One more outburst like that and I'll kill you!"

Johnny's head whipped to the left. His last thought before blackness enveloped him was keeping the keys out of the man's hands.

Marco and Chet were polishing the engine. Everyone had heard when the Squad's run with Engine 116 had been canceled. Marco silently wondered where the squad could be. He looked down at his watch. It had been an hour since the call had been cancelled.

"I wonder where Roy and Johnny are?" Marco asked.

"Who knows?" Chet shrugged and went on polishing the engine. "Gage probably saw a cute chick, and he's trying to get her phone number."

"Maybe," Marco responded. He turned his attention towards the speaker over the radio alcove. His eyes grew wide as he realized he was listening to a hostage situation going on inside Squad 51.

"Caray!" Marco muttered, "CAP!" he yelled as he ran over to the doorway.

"What's up, Marco?" Stanley asked turning in his chair to face Marco.

"There's a hostage situation, and Roy and Johnny are involved."

"A what!" Stanley spluttered.

"Listen," Marco indicated the speaker.

Stanley tilted his head at an angle so he could better hear what was going on.

At that moment they heard the man yell that he wanted the keys to the squad or the paramedic with him was a dead man. Then they heard Gage's voice.

They both turned toward the engine, startled by the sound of something metallic striking the concrete flooring. Chet looked like he was about to faint.

The tones sounded spurring the men into motion. "Engine 51 respond to Squad 51's hostage incident." The engine roared out of the station with each man's thoughts hoping for the best for Johnny.

Johnny opened his eyes slowly, catching sight of his reflection. Blood seeped from the wound in his hairline.

Johnny turned slightly towards the robber. "Why don't you give yourself up? You can't go anywhere."

"Look," the robber jabbed Johnny painfully in the ribs with his gun, "when I want your opinion, I'll ask for it!" The robber's eyes narrowed. "You say one more thing, and I'll blow you away right here, right now!"

Johnny felt helpless, his mind slowly registering the fact that the man could make good on his threat of blowing up the squad. His eyes focused on a stick of dynamite that was barely peeping out of the bag. Johnny hoped his partner was a safe distance away, and began to resign himself to his fate.

Roy felt helpless. His partner was in the squad with a possible homicidal maniac, and here he was on the other side of the police line unable to help his best friend and partner.

He looked on as the SWAT team was positioned in strategic positions around the area, then he heard the familiar siren, and looked up to see Engine 51 pulling up to the nightmarish scene.

As soon as the engine stopped, Roy ran over to Stanley. "How's Johnny holding up?" Stanley asked.

"I don't know. They haven't been able to raise the guy on the radio for the last ten minutes. We can't even get a good look inside with the hood still up."

"What were you two doing here in the first place?" Stanley demanded.

"Well, the fan belt broke on the squad. Johnny was replacing it while I went to get some hamburgers for our lunch."

Stanley put his hand on Roy's shoulder, giving the older of his two paramedics a reassuring squeeze. "I'm sure it'll all be okay."

"I wish I could believe that, and all the guy wants are these," Roy replied fishing the keys to the squad from

his pants pocket.

The SWAT sniper lay on the roof of the finance company across the street. He looked through his sight and into the squad's passenger side window. He picked up his walkie talkie, "I've got a direct shot from here on the suspect. It looks like he's already worked his hostage over a few times, and he's got his gun pressed into the hostage's ribs."

The sniper heard a '10-4' come from the small hand held radio. "Just sit tight, and keep an eye on him. The hostage negotiator is going to try one more time to get his attention."

"10-4," the sniper replied as he wrapped the rifle's carrying strap around his arm and made himself as comfortable as he could on top of the building.

The negotiator's voice crackled over the radio again. "If you give up your hostage, we'll give you the keys."

The robber grabbed the mike, "No way, man! I'm not going to give up my human shield till I'm across the border!"

"I'm sorry we can't do that. You have to give up your hostage first, then we'll give you the keys."

"That's it! I've had enough of this crap! You've just signed this guys death warrant!"

Dixie McCall stood at the base station, following the unfolding drama transmitted over the scanner. She picked up a phone receiver and dialed. "Page Dr. Brackett to Emergency."

She heard the gunman make his final threat and all went silent. She stood at the base station ready for the call that she knew was coming.

Roy listened to the negotiator trying to talk some sense into the suspect. He heard a muffled bang come from inside the squad, and then the next thing he knew all hell broke loose. Almost simultaneously, a shot was fired from the roof of the finance company. The sniper's voice barked through the SWAT commander's walkie talkie. "Suspect is down!"

Roy watched as the police converged on the squad. One of the officers checked on the suspect seeing the head wound. He knew there was no way the suspect could have survived the head wound.

Another officer grabbed the driver's side door throwing it open. He reached grabbing the hostage's wrist checking for a pulse. He hollered over his shoulder, "He's alive!"

That was Roy's cue. He and the engine crew immediately set to work. "Chet I need a cervical collar! Marco get the backboard!" Roy called noting the bruises on Johnny's face and the obvious makings of a head injury. How serious he couldn't tell yet until they had Johnny out of the squad.

Roy placed the cervical collar around Johnny's neck, and carefully eased him out on the backboard that Captain Stanley and Mike Stoker held in their hands as Marco and Chet both ran back around the squad grabbing the rest of the equipment that Roy would need for working on Johnny.

Stanley looked at his injured paramedic. He visably winced as he saw the growing red stain on the right side of Johnny's shirt.

Roy dropped to his knees beside Johnny as Stoker and Captain Stanley lay the backboard down on the ground. He pulled out his shears and slicked open the bloodied shirts and examined the entry wound in Johnny's side.

Chet and Marco dropped down with the drug and trauma boxes, while Hank opened the biophone and slapped the antenna in place. He grabbed the handset and depressed it.

Roy looked down in his partner's face noting that his partner was unconcious. "Johnny," he called, "Johnny your going to be all right."

Roy looked up at Mike, "Bandage that scalp wound for me."

Mike nodded affirmative and grabbed the gauze and Johnny's pair of bandage scissors.

"Marco, get a pressure bandage on that gunshot wound," Roy ordered as he set to getting John's vitals for Rampart.

Roy could hear Captain Stanley's voice over the biophone as he made contact with Rampart. "Rampart, this is Squad 51."

Stanley was immediately rewarded with the sound of Dixie McCall's voice over the radio. "Squad 51, this is Rampart. Go ahead."

"Rampart, we have a male hostage victim, he has mutltiple lacerations to the face, along with contusions to the left side of his head. He has also been shot. Be advised that the victim is unconcious."

"What are his vitals, 51?"

"Rampart BP is 100/64, pulse is 120 and Respiration is 15. The bullet went through the area of the eleventh and twelveth intercostal space."

"10-4, 51," Stanley now heard the voice of Dr. Brackett. "Check for an exit wound. Start victim on 6 liters O2 and an IV of Ringers Lactate. Transport as soon as possible."

"10-4, Rampart," Stanley replied as Roy with Marco and Mike's help turned John so Roy could get a look at his partner's back and left side.

"Damn," Roy cursed. "Cap, tell Rampart there isn't an exit wound."

Stanley acknowledged Roy and picked up the receiver to the biophone again. Pressing the button on the receiver, he spoke, "Rampart, there isn't an exit wound."

"10-4, 51," Brackett responded. "Get that IV started and transport as soon as possible."

"10-4, Rampart," Stanley broke down the biophone getting it ready for transport. He reached out to place a hand on Gage's shoulder, "Hang in there, Pal," he whispered.

"Kelly," Stanley roared making Chet nearly jump out of his boots, "what's the ETA of that ambulance?"

Chet ran over to the engine contacting dispatch, he didn't like what he heard. "Cap," he hollered, "There's a

delay on the ambulance, it'll be at least thirty to forty-five minutes before they can send one."

Roy's head snapped up, "Cap, Johnny can't wait that long he needs to be transported now."

"Kelly, get the stokes off the squad. We'll transport him on the engine."

Kelly was lost in his own thoughts as he ran over to the squad to get the stokes. As he neared the squad, he slowed and for the first time took a peek inside, that's the first he noticed the blood from the robber that had splattered the windshield, the dashboard, and what covered Johnny's face.

He reached the rear of the squad and pulled out the stokes. Before going back over to the area where the other guys were working on Johnny, he grabbed a blanket pack.

Silently, he wiped away the tear that he hoped no one else had seen.

Chet returned with the stokes and they quickly got Johnny packaged, and loaded up onto the hosebed of the engine. Marco and Chet brought up the equipment for Roy.

Roy was busy rechecking Johnny's vitals as the engine pulled out. He began to press on Johnny's abdomen and noted some rigidity, indicating internal bleeding.

He didn't like that at all. "Marco, can you open the biophone for me?" Roy placed his stethoscope against Johnny's abdomen checking his bowel sounds. Normal, he noted with relief. *At least there doesn't seem to be any bleeding around his bowels.*

"Chet, get me another IV ready to hang." Roy rechecked Johnny's bp which had dropped again to 90/54. "Come on, partner, fight," Roy muttered, as he made contact with Rampart again.

"Rampart, this is Squad 51, victim has rigidity in the abdomen, but no unusual sounds in the bowels. Blood pressure has dropped to 90/54."

"10-4, 51. Start another IV of Ringers. What's your ETA?" asked Brackett.

"Rampart, we're 5 minutes away."

"Affirmative 51, we'll be ready."

Mike Stoker carefully backed the big engine into the ambulance bay, where they were met by Dr. Brackett and a few members of his trauma team. Hands reached up to help Roy and Chet hand the stokes down off the hosebed.

The stokes, holding Johnny, was placed upon the gurney and quickly rushed inside the ER. Dixie met them and looked down at the blood splattered face of John Gage. The red of the blood made an eerie contrast to the pale pallor of his skin.

The gurney was wheeled into the treatment room, and helping hands quickly transferred Johnny from the stokes to the exam table. Dr. Morton quickly helped Roy to remove Johnny's clothes, while Dixie cleaned

off the blood from Johnny's face.

Another nurse was taking Johnny's vitals again, while Dr. Brackett was ordering a string of tests. "Carol, I want a CBC, Electrolytes, BUN, Creatinine, Glucose, PT/PTT, Arterial Lactate, ABG, Urinalysis, Urine dip for blood, and Serum tests run. Let's also get a portable X-Ray down here and get a chest, and abdomen, a full skull series, and a lateral spine series."

Carol moved in to draw the blood while Dixie placed the Foley Catheter into place. As she worked Dixie noticed that not once did Johnny flinch or wince like he usually did.

Brackett began with his external examination, "Roy, Mike, would you log-roll him so I can get a better look at the rest of him."

Roy nodded and Mike answered, "Sure ,Doc." Both men rolled Johnny onto his left side, and Roy winced seeing the large bruise on the right side of his partners back.

Brackett frowned. Johnny was one of the best paramedics he had working out of Rampart Hospital, and the fact that he hadn't regained conciousness yet concerned him.

Both Brackett and Morton mulled over the test results when they heard a slight moan from the examination table on the other side of the room. Dixie had never left Johnny's side.

Roy hurried over to the examination table on the opposite side of Dixie.

She looked down on the wounded paramedics face and gazed into his pain filled eyes. "Your at Rampart," she soothed, seeing his uncomprehending glance.

"How?" Johnny asked not exactly remembering what happened.

Roy spoke, "You were in a hostage situation, and the guy went off and shot you."

"Oh..." Johnny moaned, and then sucked in a breath of air between his teeth as the reality of what had happened sunk into his brain, and answered the question of the nightmarish images he had been seeing, replayed over and over again.

Dr. Brackett moved over to the table, "Johnny, we're going to give you something for the pain, and then we'll send you up to surgery."

"How bad?"

"Johnny, I'm not going to lie to you. It appears that the bullet nicked your liver. There's also a possibility of other internal damage. We'll know more soon."

"Johnny," said Morton, moving into his field of vision, "we're going to insert a nasogastric tube, and then we'll give you something to relax you enough so that we can intubate without any difficulty."

Johnny nodded his head slowly. He felt the tube being slowly inserted into his nose, it gave him a burning sensation and made him want to gag.

Johnny heard Brackett's voice, "All right, you need to swallow as I push the tube down to your stomach."

Johnny felt the tube slide down his throat, gagging reflexively. After what seemed like an eternity, the tube was in. Johnny relaxed marginally.

"Dixie, give him 2 mg's Lorazepam IV," Brackett called over his shoulder as he eased the nasogastric tube into place.

Dixie inserted the injection into Johnny's cannula and pushed the plunger in. Johnny seemed to become glassy eyed as the medication soon took effect.

Brackett quickly, and skillfully intubated Johnny, and hooked him into the respirator. Kel leaned over his injured friend, "Johnny, we're sending you up to the OR now."

Roy watched silently as Johnny was wheeled out of the treatment room, and onto the elevator. That's when he noticed the rest of the crew.

Captain Stanley walked over. "Roy?" he asked quietly.

Roy looked down at his feet, "Johnny's got a lacerated liver," he began slowly.

Stanley gave his paramedic's shoulder a reassuring squeeze. "Well, listen, the squad's out of service. Call us if John needs anything."

Roy tried to smile but it came out as a partial frown, "Okay, Cap," Roy replied softly.

Stanley gave Roy a pat on the shoulder and turned to gather up his other men.

As they left, Roy silently prayed.

Joanne entered the ER searching desperately for her husband. She had just returned home from running errands when Captain Stanley had called her.

Worry for Roy's sanity consumed Joanne. Johnny was such an important facet of Roy's life, she didn't know how he would react if Johnny died.

'Lord, please give them both strength,' she prayed to herself as she scanned the faces moving around her.

"Hi, Joanne,"

Joanne turned at the voice of Dixie McCall. "Dixie! Do you know where Roy is? Captain Stanley called me earlier and told me what happened to Johnny."

"Roy's up in the waiting room on the surgical floor, Joanne. Johnny's in surgery," she added to the next, unspoken questions. Dixie led Joanne over to a small alcove where they would be able to speak in private without anyone bothering them. "His liver was lacerated when the robber shot him, and he was pretty out of it when they brought him in. But he regained consciousness before they took him up to surgery."

"I'd better get up there with Roy. Thank you so much, Dixie." Joanne quickly made her way to the elevator and pressed the UP button.

'How many times...!' Joanne asked herself, as the elevator doors opened and she stepped inside. She smiled grimly. However many times it takes.

Johnny was such a special person. Joanne thought of all the times that he'd come over to help Roy on a project around the house. She stifled a laugh as she thought about the story of Johnny and all the Phantom's water bombs the day Johnny had rescued that little girl from the tree house. The girl's mother had gotten herself all hung up over Johnny.

The elevator stopped and she was brought back to the real world by the sight of her husband. Joanne stepped up to him as he paced. "Oh, Roy, I came as soon as Captain Stanley called."

"...Jo," Roy grabbed his wife and clung to her tightly. "It's all my fault Joanne. If I had just left those damned keys in the squad, Johnny would be fine now."

"Roy, you don't know that. If he had gotten his hands on the keys, he might have killed Johnny right there on the spot."

Dr. Brackett stepped out of the OR. As he rounded the corner he spotted Roy in an embrace with Joanne. He stopped for a moment, then stepped up behind the couple. He cleared his throat.

Roy released Joanne, his expression hopeful.

"Roy, Joanne, Johnny made it through surgery fine. He was very lucky--the damage done to his liver was minimal. Thankfully, the gun was a small caliber, or we might have lost him."

"When can I go see him?"

"Well, Johnny's in recovery right now. We'll get him settled into ICU for the night, and you can see him after that."

"Thanks Doc." Roy was visibly relieved.

"No problem at all, Roy."

Johnny woke in the recovery room, he was still attached to the respirator. He saw the face of a nurse looking down on him. "Mr. Gage, the respiratory therapist will be here in a moment to take you off the respirator."

Johnny didn't have to wait long. "Hello, Mr. Gage, I'm Linda Wilson your respiratory therapist. Dr. Brackett ordered that you be taken off the respirator as soon as you woke."

Johnny tried to smile, but the tube in his mouth made that small feat impossible.

"All right, Mr. Gage, cough as I begin taking this out." Johnny coughed as soon as Linda began pulling on the tube, and finally it was out. He tried to say thanks but his throat was too dry and sore.

"That's fine, Mr. Gage. Any problems breathing?" Linda watched him carefully.

Johnny shook his head, though keeping his eyes open was almost impossible.

"It's all right, Mr. Gage," Linda patted his hand as he drifted off to sleep again.

Johnny woke again to see his surroundings had changed. He heard the monitors beeping around him. A noise off to his left made him look over to see a different nurse switching out his IV's and adding a bag of what he guessed was an antibiotic.

The nurse smiled down on him when she saw he was awake, wrote a few notes on his chart, and then left wordlessly.

He was almost asleep again when a familiar face stuck his head into the room.

"Hi," Johnny slurred, smiling weakly.

"Hi yourself," Roy replied. "You sure look better."

"I think, I'll take that..." Johnny yawned hugely, "as a compliment."

"I'm really sorry about earlier today. If I had known..."

Johnny stopped Roy before he could say anything further, "Roy, you had no idea this was going to happen. Neither did I." Johnny yawned again and fought to hold his eyes open. "Next time we have to stop for a minor repair, let's call Charlie..." Johnny closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.

"You've got it, partner."

The End

Author's Notes: Thanks first go to Theresa who let me bounce ideas off of her for this, also Patricia Embry for the medical help. If there are any medical flaws they're mine. Another great big thanks to MJ and Theresa for beta reading this. ;-) Thanks for all the help!!